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Article

Social Media Practices among HUMSS Students in a Private School in Cabuyao City

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Abstract: This study evaluates the social media practices of HUMSS students from a private school in Cabuyao City through examinations of fact-checking and personal data protection and digital footprint awareness. Students face challenges in information management and privacy protection and online identity maintenance because social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram and TikTok have gained widespread popularity. The research bases its framework on Levine's Truth-Default Theory and Westin's Privacy Theory and Meckin's Digital Footprint Management Theory. The research design uses quantitative methods while collecting data through a structured survey instrument. The assessment of students' knowledge and practices uses descriptive statistics to analyze data that compares results based on student age, gender and socio-economic status. The research findings demonstrate that students demonstrate average knowledge about fact-checking and privacy controls yet they struggle with proper information analysis and digital footprint management. The study demonstrates that schools should teach digital literacy as a curriculum subject to enhance students' responsible social media use abilities. The research contributes to digital citizenship discussions while providing educational and policy recommendations for meeting student digital literacy needs in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Social Media Practices, Digital Literacy, Fact-Checking, Privacy Awareness, Digital Footprint Management

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1. Introduction

Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Messenger became popular social networking sites for students. The Global Digital Report 2024 found that Filipinos used these sites for socializing, passive enjoyment, and knowledge. According to the Pew Research Center's 2021 study, 85% of teens accessed social media and 95% had cell phones. This excessive usage made it hard for pupils to understand digital literacy concepts like maintaining one's digital footprint, evaluating content, and preserving personal data.

Students had access to false information as technology advanced. The Pew Research Center found that 64% of U.S. adults had encountered fake news, and a February 2022 Social Weather Stations survey found that 67% of Filipinos were concerned about fake news, especially on social media. Thus, it became crucial to learn how to assess web content's credibility. However, studies indicated that most students could not distinguish between real and false sources. In 2016, the Stanford History Education Group found that only 20% of middle school pupils could evaluate online content. This study addressed a substantial fact-checking gap in students.

Misinformation and privacy issues were highlighted. Most students were unaware of the Data Privacy Act of 2012, which protected their privacy when they shared

information on social media. Common Sense Media (2020) found that only 30% of teens were particularly concerned about firms using their data. This ignorance led to identity theft, phishing, and other internet crimes. Most students ignored privacy regulations and terms and conditions, increasing their digital hazards. This study examined HUMSS students' social media privacy knowledge and habits.

Digital footprints—information left behind by internet users—were another issue. Digital footprints are becoming more common, but most students didn't realize how long their online behaviors lasted. Only 40% of students knew that deleting a post did not remove it from the internet, according to an ISTE poll. According to the research, kids have a poor awareness of how digital traces affect their life, including college admissions and job interviews. According to CareerBuilder, 70% of US companies used social media to investigate job applicants' backgrounds, emphasizing the importance of social media management.

Based on Professor Timothy R. Levine's Truth-Default Theory, this research studied critical thinking's role in fighting misinformation. Levine believed that people assumed communication was truthful until certain triggers aroused suspicion. Fact-checking on HUMSS students was affected by this notion. Levine believed people trusted information because they needed effective communication. This default assumption made people vulnerable to fraud since they didn't thoroughly evaluate assertions without cues or triggers. Fact-checking made people question information. Fact-checkers helped the public adopt a more skeptical view of information by checking claims.

Alan F. Westin's Privacy Theory was applied in social media privacy research. This notion described privacy as the right of people, groups, or institutions to control when, how, and how much of their information is shared. Westin identified four privacy functions: avoiding manipulation and maintaining control over personal information, sharing information selectively with specific individuals, remaining unidentified in public spaces, and limiting information disclosures to prevent intrusion. Westin's paradigm stressed active data management and the social and psychological aspects of privacy issues. This theory explained the digital privacy challenges HUMSS students faced and guided this personal data protection investigation.

According to Robert Meckin's Digital Footprint Management Theory, personal data awareness and control are crucial to digital footprint management. It included numerous practices and technology to empower individuals to understand who held and utilized their data. The key was using browser and social media privacy settings to regulate data sharing and letting people maintain their identifying information independently, typically using blockchain technology for secure data storage and encryption.

This study used Tinmaz et al. the Digital Competencies Framework provides HUMSS students with essential digital literacy training and social media engagement skills. The framework organized digital skills into four categories which included digital literacy for information evaluation and digital skills for content generation and privacy control and digital competencies for digital rights and ethical conduct knowledge and digital thinking for critical decision-making and online adaptation. The research evaluated students' technical and ethical social media literacy through this framework.

Fact-Checking, Personal Data Protection, and Digital Footprints

The research literature demonstrates that HumSS students need to practice fact-checking and protect their personal data while managing their digital footprint in their social media activities. Fact-checking stands as a vital practice because misinformation spreads throughout the digital age. Research indicates students face challenges when evaluating online information reliability which supports the need for media literacy education. Nygren et al. (2020) and Roozenbeek and Schneider (2020) discovered that students learn to identify accurate material through systematic fact-checking training. The development of this skill faces obstacles because students exhibit confirmation bias

according to G. Pennycook et al (2021) and because fact-checking tools remain inaccessible (Jalli, 2020). Educational strategies like McGrew, S. (2020)'s lateral reading techniques have improved students' online content evaluation skills.

Personal data protection is another issue, especially as students use digital platforms more. Many students understand data sharing concerns but lack the technological knowledge to take precautions (Santos, 2020). Female students are more privacy-conscious but may lack the technical ability to secure their data (McGill & Thompson, 2021). As educators and institutions battled to comply with data protection rules during the COVID-19 epidemic, online learning raised privacy concerns (Garcia & Lim, 2023). Studies like Caparas and Ferrer (2025) recommend integrating data privacy education into school curricula to prepare pupils for the digital world.

Active and passive digital footprints affect students' academic, personal, and professional lives. Greenhow and Galvin (2020) and Valeria (2021) emphasize the necessity of teaching pupils about the long-term effects of internet activity. Surveys reveal that companies and academic institutions increasingly evaluate candidates based on their digital presence, therefore responsible digital footprint management can improve students' online reputations and job prospects (CareerBuilder, 2021; Kaplan, 2021). However, many students are uninformed of the permanency and potential ramifications of their digital acts, highlighting the need for specialized education. Alonzo and Kim (2022) claim that digital literacy curriculum can improve students' online behavior and professional digital image. Jones et al. (2020) emphasize ethical concerns about digital footprints in education, emphasizing the necessity for data transparency and permission.

Research Questions

This study evaluated the knowledge of HumSS students in a Private School in Cabuyao City in the key areas of Social Media Practices such as fact-checking, personal data protection, and digital footprints. Specifically, it answers the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the HumSS students in terms of:
   1.1. Age;
   1.2. Grade Level;
   1.3. Sex; and
   1.4. Socio-economic Status?
2. What are the social media practices among HumSS students in terms of:
   2.1. Fact-checking;
   2.2. Personal data protection; and
   2.3. Digital footprints?
3. Is there a significant difference in HumSS students Social Media Practices when grouped according to their demographic profile?
4. Based on the findings of the study, what policy protocols can be proposed?

2. Materials and Methods

This Descriptive research design was used to assess HUMSS (Humanities and Social Sciences) students' understanding of fact-checking, personal data protection, and digital footprint awareness. This strategy was useful for comparing kids' social media activities by age, gender, grade level, and economic background. This research approach allows the researcher to compare and contrast two or more objects or subjects while maintaining the variables of interest. This design helped Smith (2020) find group linkages and patterns to determine how variables affected the phenomenon of interest. Thus, descriptive comparative study based on participants' demographics improved knowledge and revealed patterns that could guide future activities.

In this study, HUMSS (Humanities and Social Sciences) students of CITI Global College in Cabuyao City, Laguna, were included. The study examined fact-checking, personal data security, and digital footprint awareness in a group of students who used social media and digital platforms for academic and social purposes.

Stratified random sampling was used for a representative sample. The population was stratified by age, gender, academic level (Grade 11 or 12), and socioeconomic class. To vary the sample and avoid sampling bias, enrollment records were used to randomly select strata within each group. This ensured that the sample accurately represented HUMSS students' digital literacy views and experiences. For statistical validity, the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator selected the sample size. Around 321 pupils were questioned, enough to assess their digital literacy, fact-checking, data protection, and digital footprint.

Table 1. Respondents of the Study.

Grade Level	Population Size	Percent	Sample Size
Grade 11	998	52%	166
Grade 12	933	48%	155
Total	**1931**	**100%**	**321**

A researcher-made survey questionnaire was used to assess HUMSS students' social media competence in fact-checking, personal data protection, and digital footprint awareness. The survey measured and quantified students' knowledge in these three digital literacy domains using a descriptive comparative quantitative research approach. It was assessed using multiple choice and Likert scale questions via an embedded link. The multiple-choice questions tested students' knowledge of reliable sources, privacy threats, and digital footprint management. Students' proficiency, emotion, and self-efficacy in applying these behaviors in social media were examined using Likert-type scale items. They were asked how often they fact-checked internet content, how well they understood social media privacy settings, and how their digital footprints affected them.

This made it easy to quantify pupils' knowledge because the questions were structured. Multiple-choice questions ensured unambiguous, quantifiable, and statistically analyzed data. Likert-type scale items enabled students evaluate their digital literacy practices and compare them by age, sex, grade, and socioeconomic position.

Table 2. Likert Scale for key areas of Social Media Practices.

Scale	Range	Questionnaire	Verbal Interpretation
1	1.00 – 1.75	Never	Very Low
2	1.76 – 2.50	Sometimes	Low
3	2.51 – 3.25	Often	High
4	3.26 – 4.00	Always	Very High

Clear, unbiased questions that met study goals were included in the questionnaire to assure data quality. Before the entire survey distribution, a small group of HUMSS students at the institution pilot tested the instrument to ensure it measured the required knowledge categories.

This organized approach was suited for the quantitative research since it assessed demographic factors' impact on students' digital literacy and provided measurable, statistically analyzable data. The stratified random sample of HUMSS students was large enough to achieve statistical significance and generalizability to the CITI Global College in Cabuyao City student population.

Statistical formulas were employed for data analysis and the interpretation of results. The demographic profile of the HumSS students was analyzed based on Age, Grade Level, Sex, and Socio-economic status by applying the frequency and percentage formula; to

assess the social media practices of HumSS students regarding fact-checking, personal data protection, and digital footprints, the weighted mean for each data set was calculated; Kruskal-Wallis Test was employed to assess the significant differences in the Social Media Practices of HumSS students based on their Age, Sex, and Socio-economic status profile, given that the collected data did not follow a normal distribution; and Mann-Whitney U Test was employed to assess the significant differences in social media practices among HumSS students based on their grade level profiles, given that the data collected did not follow a normal distribution.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 3. Result in demographic profile of the HumSS students in terms of Age, Grade Level, Sex, and Socio-economic Status.

Demographic Profile		Frequency	Percent
Age	12 - 14 years old	2	1%
	15 - 17 years old	226	70%
	18 years old and above	93	29%
Grade Level	Grade 11	166	52%
	Grade 12	155	48%
Sex	Male	148	46%
	Female	157	49%
	Prefer not to say	16	5%
Socio-economic Status	Below ₱10,000 (Low-income)	154	48%
	₱10,000 - ₱30,000 (Lower middle-income)	135	42%
	₱30,001 - ₱70,000 (Middle-income)	28	9%
	₱70,001 and above (Upper middle to high-income)	4	1%

Table 4. Result in the social media practices among HumSS students in terms of Fact-Checking Practices.

Fact-Checking Practices	Weighted Mean	St. Dev.	Interpretation
1. I check if the source of the information is trustworthy before believing it.	3.63	0.70	Very High
2. I verify the author or creator of the content on social media.	3.35	0.79	Very High
3. I look for information from multiple sources to check its credibility.	3.26	0.83	High
4. I consider the reputation of the website or page before trusting its content.	3.36	0.77	Very High
5. I only trust information that is from well-known and credible sources.	3.35	0.82	Very High
6. I question information that seems suspicious or exaggerated on social media.	3.12	0.87	High
7. I can identify when information might be misleading.	3.07	0.80	High
8. I avoid sharing posts that contain biased or unreliable information.	3.58	1.28	Very High
9. I am aware of common types of misinformation that appear on social media.	3.34	0.80	Very High
10. I recognize when information might be intended to manipulate opinions.	3.12	0.86	High
11. I use fact-checking websites or tools to verify information.	3.13	0.93	High
12. I cross-reference information with other sources before sharing it.	3.35	0.84	Very High
13. I check if an image or video has been manipulated before sharing.	3.26	0.86	Very High
14. I verify statistics or data shared in posts by comparing with trusted sources.	3.18	0.80	High
15. I avoid sharing content that I am unable to verify.	3.54	0.79	Very High
Average Weighted Mean	**3.31**	**0.45**	**Very High**

Table 5. Result in the social media practices among HumSS students in terms of Personal Data Protection.

Personal Data Protection	Weighted Mean	St. Dev.	Interpretation
1. I adjust privacy settings to control who can see my posts.	3.61	0.75	Very High
2. I avoid sharing sensitive personal information on social media.	3.65	0.72	Very High
3. I am cautious about sharing my location online.	3.66	0.69	Very High
4. I am aware of privacy settings on my social media profiles.	3.70	0.64	Very High
5. I restrict who can send me messages or view my profile on social media.	3.20	0.95	High
6. I know how to block or report unwanted interactions on social media.	3.88	2.32	Very High
7. I limit which third-party apps have access to my social media data.	3.36	0.82	Very High
8. I only allow trusted individuals to follow my social media accounts.	3.26	1.01	High
9. I frequently review the permissions of apps linked to my accounts.	3.34	0.84	Very High
10. I control who can tag or mention me in posts.	3.52	0.79	Very High
11. I use strong passwords to protect my social media accounts.	3.58	0.77	Very High
12. I enable two-factor authentication on my accounts.	3.31	0.89	Very High
13. I change my passwords regularly to improve security.	2.89	1.02	High
14. I am cautious of links or messages from unknown sources.	3.59	0.75	Very High
15. I avoid connecting to social media on unsecured networks (e.g., public Wi-Fi).	3.23	0.92	High
Average Weighted Mean	**3.45**	**0.48**	**Very High**

Table 6. Result in the social media practices among HumSS students in terms of Digital Footprints.

Digital Footprints	Weighted Mean	St. Dev.	Interpretation
1. I consider how my posts contribute to my digital footprint.	3.33	0.85	Very High
2. I am aware that my online activity leaves a permanent digital record.	3.26	0.83	Very High
3. I avoid sharing posts or comments that may negatively impact my reputation.	3.57	0.74	Very High
4. I understand how my digital actions are traceable by others.	3.28	0.87	Very High
5. I am conscious of how my digital footprint may affect future opportunities.	3.32	0.81	Very High
6. I think about how my posts might be perceived by others.	3.55	0.78	Very High
7. I understand the potential long-term impact of what I share online.	3.50	0.75	Very High
8. I avoid sharing content that may harm my future opportunities.	3.60	0.73	Very High
9. I am aware that employers may check my social media profiles.	3.40	0.81	Very High
10. I consider the consequences before sharing controversial opinions.	3.46	0.80	Very High
11. I regularly review and delete old posts that may harm my reputation.	3.51	0.77	Very High
12. I use privacy tools to manage my digital footprint.	3.43	0.82	Very High
13. I monitor my online activity to ensure a positive digital presence.	3.50	0.80	Very High
14. I delete outdated information that no longer represents me.	3.53	0.77	Very High
15. I take steps to minimize unwanted content from my digital footprint.	3.48	0.79	Very High
Average Weighted Mean	**3.45**	**0.48**	**Very High**

Table 7. Summary Result in the social media practices among HumSS students.

Social Media Practices	Weighted Mean	St. Dev.	Interpretation
Fact-Checking Practices	3.31	0.45	Very High
Personal Data Protection	3.45	0.48	Very High

Digital Footprints	3.45	0.48	Very High

The results show that HumSS students in a private school in Cabuyao City exhibit very high levels of engagement in three key areas of social media practices: fact-checking, personal data protection, and digital footprint management. The average weighted mean for fact-checking practices was 3.31 with a standard deviation of 0.45, while both personal data protection and digital footprint management had a mean of 3.45 and a standard deviation of 0.48. These high means indicate that students are generally very engaged and aware in these areas. However, the standard deviations suggest that there is some variability among students, meaning not all are equally proficient in these practices.

The research indicates that most students practice responsible digital behaviors yet there are remaining gaps which require attention to achieve equal preparedness for all students. The differences in proficiency levels among students could stem from variations in resource availability and training opportunities and individual drive. The results demonstrate why educational institutions should create specific programs to help students who need additional support so all students can build strong media literacy and privacy awareness and digital management abilities.

Multiple studies have established the significance of these skills. The literature shows that fact-checking stands as a vital component of media literacy according to Vigderman (2022) and Watts (2023) while Nygren et al. (2020) and Roozenbeek and Schneider (2020) demonstrate that students need structured training to identify reliable information. Jali (2020) and Pennycook and Rand (2018) and Wineburg & McGrew (2021) explain how students face obstacles including tool limitations and cognitive biases while requiring educational programs like the "Break the Fake Movement" to develop positive online behaviors.

Similarly, Santos and Cruz (2021) and Caparas and Ferrer (2025) identify knowledge gaps about privacy laws and technical abilities for data protection which supports the need for privacy education. The authors Greenhow and Galvin (2020) and Villanueva and Dela Cruz (2022) and Garcia and Lim (2023) emphasize the requirement of systematic frameworks for data protection and digital footprint management because of rising online learning and digital engagement. Green and Houghton (2023) along with Valeria (2021) and Tabor et al. (2021) demonstrate how digital footprints affect the future and ethical concerns thus supporting the need for complete digital literacy education.

Table 8. Result in the test of significant difference in HumSS students Social Media Practices when grouped according to demographic profile.

Demographic Profile	Social Media Practices	Statistics	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Age	Fact-Checking Practices	10.31	0.006	With Significant	Reject Ho
	Personal Data Protection	8.64	0.013	With Significant	Reject Ho
	Digital Footprints	12.46	0.002	With Significant	Reject Ho
Grade Level	Fact-Checking Practices	8858.5	0.000	With Significant	Reject Ho
	Personal Data Protection	8312	0.000	With Significant	Reject Ho
	Digital Footprints	8362	0.000	With Significant	Reject Ho
Sex	Fact-Checking Practices	1.85	0.397	Without Significant	Accept Ho
	Personal Data Protection	11.75	0.003	With Significant	Reject Ho
	Digital Footprints	17.97	0.001	With Significant	Reject Ho
Socio-economic Status	Fact-Checking Practices	21.94	0.000	With Significant	Reject Ho
	Personal Data Protection	6.62	0.085	Without Significant	Accept Ho

	Digital Footprints	9.77	0.021	With Significant	Reject Ho

Decision rule: *If p val < α, Reject Ho; and If p val > α, Accept Ho*

The research findings showed that HumSS students displayed various social media behaviors depending on their age group and their academic year level and gender and socio-economic background. The research findings showed that students at different developmental stages along with their cognitive maturity level influence their fact-checking behavior and their ability to protect their personal data and manage their digital footprint. Social media practice differences among students were related to grade level progression from Grade 11 to Grade 12 because students received more digital literacy education and faced increased academic requirements. Students who were male and female and did not reveal their gender showed different levels of personal data protection and digital footprint management skills according to the research findings. The research findings indicate that fact-checking and digital footprint practices of students differ based on their socio-economic status because students' resource availability and media literacy education exposure impact their digital behaviors.

The research data suggests that HumSS students demonstrate strong digital literacy skills yet face variations in their practices based on their demographic characteristics. The differences in social media practices require targeted educational interventions that must be both inclusive and equitable. The implementation of age-based and grade-specific programs alongside gender-sensitive and socio-economically inclusive methods will help bridge digital skills and critical thinking gaps among students from different backgrounds. All students need equal support to master responsible digital citizenship while developing their online presence management skills and learning to protect their personal data and evaluate information critically.

Research provides evidence that supports these findings. Research by Akram and Kumar (2025) and Greenhow and Galvin (2020) shows how developmental stages and cognitive maturity affect digital behavior so age-specific interventions should be implemented. The research by Ferrer and Caballes (2025) along with Samala et al. (2024) shows that structured educational frameworks with social media literacy integration in curricula help reduce grade-level disparities. The research by McGill and Thompson (2021) and Santos and Cruz (2021) and Caparas and Ferrer (2025) shows how privacy awareness varies between genders and how digital literacy programs need to be inclusive while the studies by Vigderman (2022) and McGrew et al. (2021) and Roozenbeek and Schneider (2020) demonstrate that fact-checking and digital footprint management differ based on socio-economic status.

Greenhow and Galvin (2020) together with Wineburg and McGrew (2021) and Valeria (2021) emphasize the necessity of teaching students' evidence-based methods to evaluate online content and understand how digital actions become permanent. Research evidence supports the need for complete structured inclusive digital literacy education that meets the special requirements of students through their age and grade level and sex and socio-economic status. The implementation of such educational programs enables teachers to ensure students learn essential critical digital skills for responsible and effective digital interaction.

Table 9. Result in the Post Hoc Test on Social Media Practices when grouped according to demographic profile.

Post Hoc Test		group 1	group 2	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Age	Fact-Checking Practices	A	B	0.146	Without Significant	Accept Ho
		A	C	0.054	Without Significant	Accept Ho
		B	C	0.005	With Significant	Reject Ho
	Personal Data Protection	A	B	0.208	Without Significant	Accept Ho
		A	C	0.089	Without Significant	Accept Ho

		B	C	0.010	With Significant	Reject Ho
	Digital Footprints	A	B	0.229	Without Significant	Accept Ho
		A	C	0.079	Without Significant	Accept Ho
		B	C	0.001	With Significant	Reject Ho
Sex	Personal Data Protection	A	B	0.008	With Significant	Reject Ho
		A	C	0.136	Without Significant	Accept Ho
		B	C	0.008	With Significant	Reject Ho
	Digital Footprints	A	B	0.001	With Significant	Reject Ho
		A	C	0.043	With Significant	Reject Ho
		B	C	0.001	With Significant	Reject Ho
Socio-economic Status	Fact-Checking Practices	A	B	0.000	With Significant	Reject Ho
		A	C	0.001	With Significant	Reject Ho
		A	D	0.961	Without Significant	Accept Ho
		B	C	0.305	Without Significant	Accept Ho
		B	D	0.376	Without Significant	Accept Ho
		C	D	0.215	Without Significant	Accept Ho
	Digital Footprints	A	B	0.004	With Significant	Reject Ho
		A	C	0.131	Without Significant	Accept Ho
		A	D	0.538	Without Significant	Accept Ho
		B	C	0.891	Without Significant	Accept Ho
		B	D	0.200	Without Significant	Accept Ho
		C	D	0.244	Without Significant	Accept Ho

Decision rule: *If p val < α, Reject Ho; and If p val > α, Accept Ho*

Legend:

For Age: *A (12 - 14 years old); B (15 - 17 years old); and C (18 years old and above)*

For Sex: *A (Male); B (Female); and C (Prefer not to say)*

For Socio-economic Status: *A (Below ₱10,000 (Low-income)); B (₱10,000 - ₱30,000 (Lower middle-income)); C (₱30,001 - ₱70,000 (Middle-income)); and D (₱70,001 and above (Upper middle to high-income))*

The post hoc analysis using Dunn's Test revealed significant differences in HumSS students' social media practices when grouped by age, sex, and socio-economic status. For age, significant differences were found between the 15–17 and 18+ age groups in fact-checking, personal data protection, and digital footprints, with older students demonstrating more refined and deliberate practices. Regarding sex, significant differences emerged in personal data protection and digital footprints, particularly between male, female, and "prefer not to say" groups, indicating distinct behaviors and awareness levels in managing online presence. For socio-economic status, significant differences were observed in fact-checking and digital footprints, especially between low-income and both lower middle- and middle-income groups, suggesting that access to resources and exposure to digital literacy education influence students' online behaviors.

These findings imply that students' social media practices are shaped by developmental maturity, gender-related experiences, and socio-economic background. As students mature or gain more exposure to digital platforms, their ability to critically evaluate information and manage their digital identities improves. However, disparities persist, particularly among younger students, different gender groups, and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This highlights the need for targeted, inclusive, and equitable digital literacy programs that address the unique needs of each group, ensuring that all students are equipped to navigate the digital world responsibly and effectively.

Research supports these implications. Akram and Kumar (2025) and McGrew et al. (2021) emphasize the influence of cognitive maturity and developmental stages on adolescents' social media practices, noting that younger students often lack the media literacy skills necessary for responsible online behavior. Greenhow and Galvin (2020) and

Ferrer and Caballes (2025) highlight the importance of structured educational frameworks and targeted interventions to bridge gaps in digital literacy across age and gender groups. McGill and Thompson (2021) and Santos and Cruz (2021) further note that female students tend to be more privacy-conscious, but all students benefit from tailored digital literacy education.

Vigderman (2022), Roozenbeek and Schneider (2020), and Valeria (2021) underscore the critical role of fact-checking and digital footprint management in media literacy, especially for students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. They argue that disparities in access to digital resources and education can lead to varying levels of engagement and awareness. Greenhow and Galvin (2020) and Ferrer and Caballes (2025) advocate for equitable access to digital literacy programs and structured educational frameworks that enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills, ensuring responsible digital behavior across all demographic groups.

4. Conclusion

a. The The demographic profile of the HumSS students in the private school in Cabuyao City is a complex population in terms of age, grade level, sex, and socio-economic status. The target population of the respondents is 15 to 17 years old, with equal number of respondents from Grade 11 and Grade 12, and a not so significant difference in number of males and females. The results show that most of the respondents are from low income and lower middle-income groups. Through this, a general description of the respondents' background is given, which may have a bearing on their social media practices and digital literacy.

b. The study revealed that HumSS students' social media practices are very much evident especially in the areas of fact checking, personal data protection and digital footprint management. In these areas, students are very highly engaged and aware, showing that they can critically think through information online, protect their personal data and manage their digital presence responsibly. However, the variability in proficiency levels suggests that not all students are as efficient, which underscores the need for specific efforts to be made to ensure that the whole student population has good and efficient social media practices.

c. The study revealed that there are significant differences in the social media practices of HumSS students when divided into categories based on their demographic profile. Age, grade level, sex, and socio-economic status were all found to make a difference to students' behaviours and attitudes towards fact-checking, personal data protection, and digital footprint management. Older students, those in the higher grade levels and students from the higher socio-economic levels were found to have better practices. Furthermore, in some areas, female students were more cautious than their male counterparts. These results underscore the need for comprehensive and specific digital literacy curriculum to meet the specific needs of students based on their demographic characteristics.

d. The Social Media Literacy and Responsible Practices Policy serves as a comprehensive framework to address the critical findings of the study on social media practices among HumSS students in a private school in Cabuyao City. By emphasizing fact-checking, personal data protection, and digital footprint management, the policy fosters a culture of digital literacy, critical thinking, and responsible online behavior. It ensures that students, faculty, and staff are equipped with the necessary skills to navigate the digital landscape safely and ethically. This policy not only safeguards the online integrity of the school community but also aligns with broader educational goals of preparing students for the challenges of the digital age.

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